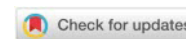


# "OTHERNESS" DEPICTED IN TRAVELOGUES: MACEDONIA IN GERMAN-LANGUAGE TRAVELOGUES

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**Abstract:** In the German-language travelogues, the term Macedonia is mostly used almost exclusively as a geographical designation. The reasons for this lie in the author's perception, which is basically burdened by his own mission, cultural background and already (subtly) imposed stereotypes built on the basis of previous knowledge (information that is also shaped according to these factors).

The missions are different: economic, political, natural-scientific, religious, sociological-ethnological, in some cases literary-scientific. That is why it is difficult to identify the literary genre in one of the established literary frameworks. What can be confirmed about this genre with absolute certainty is its multidisciplinary approach, and it will be investigated from this perspective.

In this paper, the factors that influence the perception of the travel writer during his creation will be considered. The aim is to present the representation of Macedonia in German-language travelogues, focusing centrally on the travel writer and covering all the factors influencing his work as he presents Macedonia in his works.

**Keywords:** travelogue, otherness, perception, representation, Macedonia

Field: Humanities

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In literary studies, there are many different definitions of the term "travel literature", but in fact, it should first be emphasized that it is a generic term for a type of literary genre in which real or fictional travels are shown. On the one hand, travel writing includes practically oriented travel manuals, which provide useful information for travelers such as travel guides, as well as scientific travel descriptions (research travel) in the form of travel diaries or sketches. On the other hand, travel literature also includes the literary travelogue, the travelogue short story, and the travelogue novel, in which real or fictional travel experiences are created. Therefore, it is a genre that integrates both real, factual, and fictional aspects.

The very travel writing material woven into the work of the travel writer is an expression of subjective aspects – the perception, representation and goals of the author, and of the wider objective cultural-historical context. These aspects do not only refer to the German-language travelogues for Macedonia, which are the subject of our research but are also significant for the research of travelogues in general, where they can provide valuable assumptions about the conditions and context of the creation of a travelogue and its literary-aesthetic interpretation. Regarding the questions of perception, representation and goals in understanding the peculiarities of the travelogue text, the historical development of the genre can also be of help.

## 2. THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE CONTENT

There are many reasons for distrust towards the reception and reproduction of the travelogue material. The causes for these doubts are numerous, they arise from the fundamental and almost insurmountable opposition of the "own" and the "other", which has its own cultural-historical, very long-time continuity, from antiquity to the Middle Ages. In other words, we are certainly talking about a very rigid social, cultural and religious opposition. Also relevant are the personal dispositions of the travel writer, which are crystallized in the education, prior knowledge, interests as well as his general perceptive abilities, up to the reasons, and specific goals (literary, philosophical, and in general humanistic, sociological, political, military, natural-scientific, geographical, ethnological, anthropological) to create a travelogue.

The subject of critical analysis are also the modalities of the literary staging of foreignness, which are understood as a semantic determination, as the unknown from outside, as a penetration of the unknown, but also as a process for a kind of aestheticization of those phenomena. In this context, special emphasis

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should be placed on the degree of objectivity in the literary representation of foreignness, analyzing the external mechanisms, as well as the individual predispositions that influence the author during his literary staging of foreign culture, including the role of emotional discourse in travel literature.

During our analysis of west European travel writers who visited the Balkans and wrote about it, we first came to the conclusion that perceptions of a different cultural environment are almost always burdened with the load of the author's own cultural authority. The process of perception, organization and processing of perceived information does not happen on a tabula rasa, on the contrary, it is much more influenced by the categorization of information and stereotyping, which are not only affected by information from and about the natural living world, but also include the social environment of the author. A central mechanism in the creation of stereotypes exists in the subject's general readiness for social categorization, so that, for example, people are divided into members of their own or other groups. In contact with foreign cultures, this categorization and stereotyping play a decisive role in many cases in travelogues.

The travel writer carries the potential of someone who tries to stage foreignness without stereotyping it. As a stranger in a foreign land, the travel writer, since he is not bound by his roots to the singular components or to the one-sided tendencies of the local group, takes a more objective attitude towards them, which does not mean simple distancing and non-involvement, but a special formation of distance and proximity, indifference and engagement. Nevertheless, in order to be objective, he must not be bound by any predefined determinants, which could prejudice his bias, his understanding, and his assessment of the facts.

Our scholarly discussion has shown that also for the German-speaking travel writers who visited the Balkans from the end of the eighteenth century, that was almost impossible. Some visited out of curiosity, as tourists, but most came with a specific purpose: to study a certain country from a political, economic, or military angle. And travel reports were mostly written and published for the general public, who considered simple facts boring, hence the image of the Balkans was often seasoned with bias and prejudice, and the perception was also colored by the author's political sympathies.

### 3. THE OBJECTIVITY OF THE REPRESENTATION

We have to point out that there are numerous prerequisites that will make the objective perception of the travel writer impossible. The forms in which the travelogue describes the foreign are determined by the social status of the travel writers and their involvement in the mentality of social groups, and essentially depend on the technical and organizational standard. Finally, they are influenced by the personal dispositions of the travel writer, which are crystallized in the author's education, prior knowledge, interests, and general perceptive abilities. And of course, a big role in the staging of foreign culture by German-speaking travel writers is the tendency to confirm their own "enlightenment progress" and thus their own superiority in relation to the underdeveloped Balkans. We find confirmation of this finding in most of the analyzed travelogues, e.g. in the works of Johann Georg von Hahn in his travelogues "Travel from Belgrade to Thessaloniki" from 1868 and "Travel along the valley of Drim and Vardar in 1863" from 1867, who do not go into the reasons for the situations related to his conclusions and comparisons regarding the population in Macedonia during his travels.

Unlike von Hahn, Hermann Wendel in his "Southeast European questions" from 1918 essentially analyses the condition of the Macedonian peasant, explaining that he is exploited by two masters, the spahi and the bey, that he is crushed by the indescribable pressure and burden, abandoned and left at the mercy of every kind of violence, where he led a life under the rule of the great landlord that hardly deserved to be called life. Whether he dug in the fields and meadows with his family from morning to night or did some other work, the annual income from the efforts of the whole family never provided sufficient funds for a humanly decent life.

The travel writer Heinrich Barth is even more thorough in his observations; for example, in his travelogue "Journey through the interior of European Turkey" from 1864, he will write while visiting Radovich that "here personal property is extremely limited through the most shameful and ruthless despotism practiced from above", where he will witness a shameful increase in the tax on grapes. Hugo Grothe's journey from Bitola to Ohrid in 1902 is of a geographical and ethnographic nature and abounds with vivid impressions of nature filled with positive feelings, and also contains numerous photographs of the beautiful landscapes he describes, as well as of the cities he will visit. However, the photo titled "South Slavic woman from the Bitola region" is not accompanied by a description, despite her colorful costume, and no attempt has been made to reveal her nationality. On the other hand, the author dwells on a detailed

description of his riding experience - riding on a locally made wooden saddle - pointing out the discomfort, emphasizing the difference with the "European saddle" which, unfortunately, he could not find in Bitola. And Ludwig Lessen in his travelogue "Along and across the Balkans" from 1914 believes that "fine European standards should be set for the Orient, so that it can be fully enjoyed". German researchers during the First World War, on the other hand, give a completely different picture: Franz Doflein and Leonard Schulze Jena in their monographs on Macedonia give extraordinary descriptions of the natural beauties, of the life of the population, and (despite the influence of their Bulgarian colleagues) they recognize the Macedonians as a people with a special identity. The author who best describes the circumstances the Macedonian people have faced for centuries, which he substantiates as a historian, and which he writes about as a writer, philosopher and social democrat, is once more Hermann Wendel. In his works, the encounters with the population are "first-hand", and the conclusions are clear: "The Macedonian remains a Macedonian, regardless of the changes in his surname: from Jordan, to Jordanovic, through Jordanov to Jordanovic again." Despite the emotionality in his research as a result of the subjective attachment to the idea of unifying the South Slavs, his works have a high degree of objectivity and criticism. And personal emotional interests are most represented in Peter Handke's contemporary travelogues, with which he gets involved in the debate regarding the wars in the Balkans in the 90s of the last century. In "Travelling Yesterday", Handke not only offer beautiful descriptions of Macedonian nature in his unique poetic way, but also represents a large part of himself, "thinking involved". His "Story of head coverings in Skopje" resembles a kind of postmodern version of the description of folk costumes, with which Doflein in his book, about Macedonia tries to guess from which village the women he meets in the market in Skopje come from. The emotional impact is also noticeable in the "War Diary" of Wolf Oschlies, but in his book we notice a precise and detailed description of the events in Macedonia in the period between 2001 and 2004, and as for the details and reliability, we could conclude the same and for the tourist guide "North Macedonia" by Philine von Oppeln.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In the end, we can draw the conclusion that according to the historical development of the travelogue genre, the political and military circumstances and the allied relations and interests of the countries from the German-speaking area, but also the personal affinities of the writers, the depiction of Macedonia in the travelogues that are the subject of analysis in this paper vary from a critical, distanced and sometimes stereotypical representation of Macedonia to great empathy and sympathy for this area and its inhabitants. While the travelogues up to the nineteenth century are mainly empirical, and then they become more descriptive, for the travelogues from the twentieth century and for the modern travelogue, the author's emotional involvement is typical. However, a common thread, apart from the autobiographical element as a general characteristic of the travelogue as a literary genre, is the element of distance in relation to Eastern European, that is, the Balkan soil. Regardless of whether the author consciously wants to emphasize social differences and the degree of development, and for what purpose, the fact remains that to this day, the legacy of the original idea of these spaces still runs through the German-speaking as well as Western European representation of Eastern Europe and the Balkans created hundreds of years ago in the countries of the Enlightenment.

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